Marshall Memo 518

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
January 6, 2014

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"You really only know what a teacher is doing when you look at what the students are doing."

"Charlotte Danielson on Teaching and the Common Core" – an interview with Anthony Rebora, in *Education Week*, Mar. 13, 2013, http://bit.ly/1km6Axx

"[I]mproving the skills of the feedback giver won't accomplish much if the receiver isn't able to absorb what is said. It is the receiver who controls whether feedback is let in or kept out, who has to make sense of what he or she is hearing, and who decides whether or not to change."

Sheila Heen and Douglas Stone (see item #2)

"In the traditional academic model, you're passive. You sit in a chair, and the teacher tries to project knowledge at you; some of it sticks, some of it doesn't. That's not an effective way to learn. Worse, it creates a mind-set of 'you need to teach me,' so when you're on your own, you think, 'I can't learn.'"

Salman Khan in "Life's Work", an interview in *Harvard Business Review*, January-February 2014 (Vol. 92, #1-2, p. 124), no e-link

"By asking readers to notice, puzzle, and reason their way through carefully chosen texts and artifacts, teachers not only end up teaching 'the facts' of history but also help their students engage in historical thinking… What we have our students doing in this kind of teaching – noticing, asking, seeking, suggesting, articulating, theorizing – can make them not only into good readers or good historians, but also into good students, good learners."

Scott Barksdale in "Good Readers Make Good Historians" in *The History Teacher*, February 2013 (Vol. 46, #2, p. 231-252)

1. How Talent Can Be Grown

In this intriguing and important book, Daniel Coyle takes us on a journey to the world's "talent hotspots" – places from which extraordinary achievement has emerged, seemingly by magic. The conventional wisdom, says Coyle, is that "without warning, in the midst of ordinary, everyday life, a Kid from Nowhere appears. The Kid posses a mysterious natural gift for painting/math/baseball/physics, and through the power of that gift, he changes his life and the lives of those around him." But it's not magic, Coyle found. It's not genes. Our brains are set up to develop talent – if we just know how. By studying each hotspot carefully, Coyle found a consistent formula:

• *Ignition* – An event or role model that provides powerful motivation to work hard and a belief that excellent performance is achievable.

• *Master coaching* – These teachers are "talent whisperers" who help develop a love for doing something, fuel passion, inspire deep practice, and bring out the best in students.

• *Deep practice* – Hard, sustained work at the outer limits of one's current ability, developing physical or mental skill to the next level.

Coyle starts with a vivid example of deep practice – 13-year-old Clarissa practicing a new song, "Golden Wedding," on her clarinet. Clarissa is not particularly musically talented; she doesn't have a good ear, only an average sense of rhythm, and hasn't been super-motivated (she practices, she says, "because I'm supposed to"). Here's how the practice session goes.

"Clarissa draws a breath and plays two notes. Then she stops. She pulls the clarinet from her lips and stares at the paper. Her eyes narrow. She plays seven notes, the song's opening phrase. She misses the last note and immediately stops, fairly jerking the clarinet from her lips. She squints again at the music and sings the phrase softly. 'Dah dah dum *dah*,' she says. She starts over and plays the riff from the beginning, making it a few notes farther into the song this time, missing the last note, backtracking, patching in the fix. The opening is beginning to snap together – the notes have verve and feeling. When she's finished with this phrase, she stops again for six long seconds, seeming to replay it in her mind, fingering the clarinet as she thinks. She leans forward, takes a breath, and starts again… Clarissa leans into the sheet music, puzzling out a G-sharp that she's never played before. She looks at her hand, then at the music, then at her hand again. She hums the riff. Clarissa's posture is tilted forward; she looks as though she is walking into a chilly wind; her sweetly freckled face tightens into a squint. She plays the phrase again and again. Each time she adds a layer of spirit, rhythm, swing."

"This is not ordinary practice," says Coyle. "This is something else: a highly targeted, error-focused practice. Something is growing, being built. The song begins to emerge, and with it, a new quality within Clarissa… This is not a picture of talent created by genes; it's something far more interesting. It is six minutes of an average person entering a magically productive zone, one where more skill is created with each passing second." The girl practices for six minutes, but because it was *deep practice*, her skills improved tenfold. It was the equivalent of a month of practice.

When she's finished with "Golden Wedding" (for the time being), Clarissa zips through "The Blue Danube," a song she's played many times. This is not deep practice, and it does almost nothing for her clarinet-playing ability. What's the difference? The struggle. The mistakes. The regressions. The scrunched-up face. The learning curve. And the myelin in her brain. With every labored effort toward competence, this neural insulator wraps around nerve fibers, making the signals stronger and faster by preventing the electrical impulses from leaking out. "When we fire our circuits in the right way," says Coyle, "– when we practice swinging the bat or playing that note – our myelin responds by wrapping layers of insulation around that neural circuit, each new layer adding a bit more skill and speed. The thicker the myelin gets, the better it insulates, and the faster and more accurate our movements and thoughts become… The more time and energy you put into the right kind of practice – the longer you stay in the Clarissa zone, firing the right signals through your circuits – the more skill you get, or, to put it a slightly different way, the more myelin you earn."

"Deep practice is built on a paradox," he continues: "struggling in certain targeted ways – operating at the edges of your ability, where you make mistakes – makes you smarter. Or to put it a slightly different way, experiences where you're forced to slow down, make errors, and correct them – as you would if you were walking up an ice-covered hill, slipping and stumbling as you go – end up making you swift and graceful without your realizing it… When you are practicing deeply, the world's usual rules are suspended. You use time more efficiently. Your small efforts produce big, lasting results. You have positioned yourself at a place of leverage where you can capture failure and turn it into skill. The trick is to choose a goal just beyond our present abilities; to target the struggle. Thrashing blindly doesn't help. Reaching does."

In Coyle's visits to one talent hotspot after another, he found the same basic process: a lot of slow, difficult work (in the neighborhood of 10,000 hours, the amount that some researchers say is necessary for high proficiency), excellent coaches or teachers (soft and loving at first, then more demanding), and a spark of inspiration – all producing amazing achievement. Here are some of the hotspots:

• *The Link Trainer* – In the mid-1930s, lots of American military pilots were dying in crashes. The bedrock belief at the time was that good pilots were born, not made, but the birthrate couldn't keep up with the fatal accidents. Then Edwin Albert Link developed a flight simulator that allowed pilots to engage in deep practice – taking off, landing, messing up, diving, stalling, and recovering – without getting killed. The Link Trainer revolutionized pilot training and was an important factor in the Allied victory in World War II. "The Air Corps

pilots who trained in Links were no braver or smarter than the ones who crashed," says Coyle. "They simply had the opportunity to practice more deeply."

• *Brazilian soccer* – With five World Cup victories, 900 young players signed by professional European clubs each year, and a procession of stars (Pelé, Zico, Socrates, and others), there's no question that Brazil is a talent hotspot. The conventional explanation is that it's the climate, a traditional love of the sport, and the drive to escape poverty – but those factors were in place in the 1940s and 50s when Brazil did not excel internationally. Coyle found the real reason: since the 1950s, Brazilians have trained in a particular way that improves ball-handling faster than anywhere else in the world. Young Brazilians play thousands of hours of *futsal* – a shrunk-down version of soccer played with a smaller, heavier ball in an enclosed space. Players touch the ball six times more often than in the conventional game and the emphasis is on ball handling and ball control. It's all about sharp passing, looking for angles, and working quick combinations with teammates. *Futsal*, combined with other factors, led to the takeoff of Brazilian soccer.

• *The Bronte sisters* – Charlotte, Emily and Anne, living in the middle of nowhere with their tyrannical father and no mother, wrote some of the greatest works of English literature – among them *Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights, Agnes Grey,* and *The Tenant of Windfell Hall* – before dying at a young age. The explanation? The sisters spent countless hours writing "immature and imitative" children's books just for fun before settling down to write more serious literature. "Their childhood writings were collaborative deep practice," says Coyle, "where they developed their storytelling muscles… Written far from parental eyes, removed from any formal pressure, the little books functioned as the equivalent of the Link trainer, a place where the Bronte sisters fired and honed millions upon millions of circuits, tangled and untangled thousands of authorial knots, and created hundreds of works that were utter artistic failures except for two redeeming facts: each one made them happy, and each one quietly earned them a bit of skill."

• *The Z-Boys* – In the mid-1970s, this group of teenagers from California turned the skateboarding world upside down. They did aerial maneuvers, scraped their boards along curbs and handrails, and dazzled the Bahne-Cadillac Skateboard Championship in Del Mar. Their secret? The Z-Boys were experienced ocean surfers who skateboarded when the waves weren't suitable, and they happened upon the ideal myelin-developing practice turf – empty swimming pools – where they spent hundreds of hours practicing. "Once inside the pool, sliding along the steep surface, the Z-Boys had to play by the rules of the new game," says Coyle. "From a deep-practice point of view, the empty swimming pool created a world not unlike that of the little books of the Bronte sisters or the *futsal* courts of Brazil. Circuits fired and were honed. Mistakes were made, then corrected. Myelin flourishes. Talent blooms… [M]yelin doesn't care about who you are. It only cares about what you do."

• *The Renaissance* – How did the sleepy town of Florence in the 1400s accomplish so much? "[A] city with a population slightly less than that of present-day Stillwater, Oklahoma, produced the greatest outpouring of artistic achievement the world has ever known," says Coyle. "A solitary genius is easy to understand, but dozens of them, in the space of two

generations? How did it happen?" The answer: A longstanding system of apprentices who were required to spend thousands of hours "solving problems, trying and failing and trying again, within the confines of a world built on the systematic production of excellence," says Coyle. "Their life was roughly akin to that of a twelve-year-old intern who spends a decade under the direct supervision of Steven Spielberg, painting sets, sketching storyboards, setting cameras." Michelangelo said it best: "If people knew how hard I had to work to gain my mastery, it would not seem so wonderful at all."

• *Japanese schools* – "The Japanese want their kids to struggle," says Jim Stigler, the UCLA professor who wrote about the success of Japan's schools (with James Hiebert) in *The Teaching Gap*. "American teachers, though, worked like waiters. Whenever there was a struggle, they wanted to move past it, make sure the class kept gliding along. But you don't learn by gliding." One study found that Japanese 8th graders spend 44 percent of their class time inventing, thinking, and actively struggling with underlying concepts. American students spend less than one percent on similar activities.

• *Babies learning to walk* – Norwegian researchers studied the key improvement factors in babies as they struggled to stand up. It wasn't height, weight, age, brain development, or innate ability. It was the amount of time they spent trying to walk. Coyle says this is the most vivid example of what deep practice feels like – "intently, clumsily lurching toward a goal and toppling over. It's a wobbly, discomfiting sensation that any sensible person would instinctively seek to avoid. Yet the longer the babies remained in that state – the more willing they were to endure it and to permit themselves to fail – the more myelin they built and the more skill they earned. The staggering babies embody the deepest truth about deep practice: to get good, it is helpful to be willing, or even enthusiastic, about being bad. Baby steps are the royal road to skill."

What is the motivational fuel that leads people to make this kind of effort? That's where ignition comes in. For babies, it's the burning desire to move around like all the other people they see around them. For South Korean golfers, ignition happened the afternoon of May 18, 1998, when a 20-year-old named Se Ri Pak won the McDonald's LPGA Championship and became a national hero. Hundreds of young Koreans thought to themselves, "If she can do it, why can't I?" For runners, it happened in 1954 when a skinny Oxford medical student named Roger Bannister broke the four-minute mile barrier. For Clarissa, it was her teacher playing a few bars of a jazz version of "Golden Wedding." Clarissa was entranced by that version and in an instant, saw herself as a performer; everything came together, and suddenly she was on fire. The next day, Clarissa did her six minutes of practice and began to grow exponentially as a clarinetist.

"This is how ignition works," says Coyle. "Where deep practice is a cool, conscious act, ignition is a hot, mysterious burst, an awakening. Where deep practice is an incremental wrapping, ignition works through lightning flashes of image and emotion, evolution-built neural programs that tap into the mind's vast reserves of energy and attention. Where deep practice is all about staggering-baby steps, ignition is about the set of signals and subconscious forces that create our identity; the moments that lead us to say *that is who I want to be*…

Accordingly, ignition is determined by simple if/then propositions, with the *then* part always the same – *better get busy*." The language of ignition is the language of effort, not talent. In every talent hotspot he visited, Coyle heard the teachers and coaches talking about struggle and hard work.

Coyle's prime exemplar of the master teacher is John Wooden, the legendary UCLA basketball coach. Two educational psychologists spent a year watching Wooden in action and recorded 2,326 discrete acts of teaching. Of those, only 6.9 percent were compliments and 6.6 percent were expressions of displeasure. Fully 75 percent were "pure information" – countless injunctions: *This, not that. Here, not there*. "His words and gestures served as short, sharp impulses that showed his players the correct way to do something," says Coyle. "He was seeing and fixing errors. He was honing circuits. He was a virtuoso of deep practice, a one-man Link trainer… A coach's true skill consists not in some universally applicable wisdom that he can communicate to all, but rather in the supple ability to locate the sweet spot on the edge of each individual student's ability, and to send the right signals to help the student reach toward the right goal, over and over." Wooden summed up his approach this way: "Don't look for the big, quick improvement. Seek the small improvement one day at a time. That's the only way it happens – and when it happens, it lasts." As vocal coach Linda Septien said: "I'm always checking, because I need to know when they don't know."

Parents, of course, are the ultimate teachers. Carol Dweck's advice to parents boils down to two rules: Pay attention to what your children are fascinated by, and praise them for their effort.

The Talent Code by Daniel Coyle (Bantam Books, 2009)

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2. Six Steps to Receiving Criticism Well

In this valuable *Harvard Business Review* article, Sheila Heen and Douglas Stone (Harvard Law School/Triad Consulting Group) say that in the corporate world, performance evaluations aren't working very well, especially when they contain critical feedback. Here are some recent survey results [might there be similar stats from the world of K-12 schools?]:

- Only 36 percent of managers complete appraisals thoroughly and on time.
- 55 percent of employees said their most recent performance review was unfair or inaccurate.
- 25 percent said they dread evaluations more than anything else in their working lives.
- Human resources leaders said their biggest challenge was managers' unwillingness to have difficult feedback conversations.
- There's relatively little helpful coaching and mentoring.

It's obvious that many managers need to get better at delivering criticism, say Heen and Stone: "But improving the skills of the feedback giver won't accomplish much if the receiver isn't able to absorb what is said. It is the receiver who controls whether feedback is let in or kept out, who has to make sense of what he or she is hearing, and who decides whether or not to change."

The natural tendency when faced with criticism is to get defensive and push back. That's because of the tension between our need to be accepted as we are and our need to learn and grow. "As a result," say Heen and Stone, "even a benign suggestion can leave you feeling angry, anxious, badly treated, or profoundly threatened. A hedge such as 'Don't take this personally' does nothing to soften the blow." There are three ways criticism can activate psychological triggers:

- Truth triggers – The criticism seems untrue, off base, or unhelpful, making us feel wronged, indignant, exasperated.
- Relationship triggers – Something about this person makes it difficult to accept feedback that might be palatable coming from someone else ("After all I've done for you, I get this petty criticism!").
- Identity triggers – The criticism attacks your core sense of who you are, causing you to feel defensive, off balance, perhaps overwhelmed.

These are all natural reactions, say Heen and Stone: "The solution isn't to pretend you don't have them. It's to recognize what's happening and learn how to derive benefit from feedback even when it sets off one or more of your triggers. Taking feedback well is a process of sorting and filtering." Once you've done that, you can figure out if the feedback is potentially helpful or genuinely worthless. Here are their suggestions:

• *Know your tendencies*. Over time, many of us establish patterns in the way we respond to criticism, for example:

- "This is plain wrong!"
- "You're doing this by *e-mail*?"
- "You of all people!"
- "I'm flooded with shame," said one executive, "as if I'm Googling 'things wrong with me' and getting 1.2 million hits, with sponsored ads from my father and my ex."
- Smiling on the outside but seething inside;
- Getting teary;
- Being filled with righteous indignation;
- Rejecting feedback in the moment but considering it over time;
- Accepting it right away but later deciding it's baloney;
- Agreeing intellectually but having trouble changing your behavior.

If you are aware of your patterns, you can make better choices on how to process criticism. "I can reassure myself that I'm exaggerating," says the Googling guy quoted above, "and usually after I sleep on it, I'm in a better place to figure out whether there's something I can learn."

• *Disentangle the 'what' from the 'who.'* "If the feedback is on target and the advice is wise, it shouldn't matter who delivers it," say Heen and Stone. "But it does." We need to recognize when a relationship trigger has been activated, step back, and make an objective analysis of the validity of the criticism.

• *Hear the coaching side of criticism*. Most feedback has an evaluative component and a coaching component. We tend to be more attuned to the first, hearing it as an attack on how we've been doing things, even our professional competence (our identity trigger has been

pulled). "Work to hear feedback as potentially valuable advice from a fresh perspective rather than as an indictment of how you've done things in the past," advise Heen and Douglas.

• *Unpack the feedback*. For example, a woman is told by a male colleague that she should "be more assertive." She might make a snap judgment and reject the suggestion ("I think I'm pretty assertive already") or acquiesce ("I really do need to step it up"), but what does this guy really mean?

- Does he think she should speak up more often?
- Should she speak with greater conviction?
- Should she smile less? More?
- Should she have the confidence to admit she doesn't know something?
- Or the confidence to pretend she does?

Before doing anything, it's important to find out what prompted the suggestion, what her colleague saw her do or fail to do, how he defines assertiveness, what he's worried about, and what he expects. In other words, they need to talk! Only then can she decide if the suggestion is worth acting on.

• *Ask for lots of mini-feedback*. "Feedback is less likely to set off your emotional triggers if you request it and direct it," say Heen and Stone. "Soliciting constructive criticism communicates humility, respect, passion for excellence, and confidence, all in one go." So don't wait for the annual performance review; during the year, request bite-size advice. And don't ask global questions like "Do you have any feedback for me" – rather, ask "What's one thing you see me doing (or failing to do) that holds me back?" Bosses and colleagues are usually happy to respond, and the specific coaching tidbits are often helpful.

• *Engage in small experiments*. "When someone gives you advice, test it out," suggest Heen and Stone. "If it work, great. If it doesn't, tweak your approach, or decide to end the experiment."

"Find the Coaching in Criticism: The Right Ways to Receive Feedback" by Sheila Heen and Douglas Stone in *Harvard Business Review*, January-February 2014 (Vol. 92, #1-2), no e-link; this article is adapted from Heen and Stone's forthcoming book, *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback* (Viking/Penguin, 2014).

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3. Over-diagnosis of ADHD and Over-prescription of Medications

In this front-page *New York Times* article, Alan Schwarz describes how diagnoses for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder have shot up over the last 20 years. This increase has coincided with pharmaceutical companies' aggressive advertising campaigns for Ritalin, Adderall, Concerta, Forcalin, Vyvanse, and other ADHD medications to doctors, parents, and children (the last in the form of a superhero comic book). Profits for stimulant medications have gone from $1.7 billion in 2002 to $9 billion in 2012.

ADHD ads have influenced parents, doctors, and educators to widen the definition of the condition to include common childhood behaviors like carelessness, forgetfulness, impatience, and disappointing academic performance. An Ithaca, New York woman recalled

being diagnosed when she was a high-school freshman: "They were telling me, 'Honey, there's something wrong with your brain and this little pill's going to fix everything.' It changed my whole self-image, and it took me years to get out from under that." Pharmaceutical companies have often overstated the pills' benefits and made claims that are not true – for example, that ADHD is frequently inherited, that it's a lifelong condition, and that the medications are harmless. Indeed, every major ADHD drug company has been cited by the Food and Drug Administration for false and misleading advertising, some multiple times.

It's clear that ADHD is a genuine disability that impedes success in school, at work, and in the personal realm. For those who genuinely have ADHD, the right medication can control severe impulsiveness and inability to concentrate, allowing underlying drive and intelligence to be expressed. But experts like Duke University psychology professor Keith Connors estimate that only about 5 percent of children have ADHD, not the 15 percent currently diagnosed at the high-school level (according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, ADHD is the second-highest long-term diagnosis for children, just behind asthma). "The numbers make it look like an epidemic," says Connors. "Well, it's not. It's preposterous. This is a concoction to justify the giving out of medication at unprecedented and unjustifiable levels."

ADHD medications are potent drugs, regulated in the same class as morphine and oxycodone because of their potential for abuse and addiction. Inappropriate use can result in sleeplessness, loss of appetite, mood swings, hallucinations, heart palpitations, and dependency – and in rare cases, psychiatric breakdown and suicidal thoughts. But some doctors who received support from drug companies publish papers and make presentations touting the medications and downplaying concerns – "safer than aspirin" some say. Patient advocacy groups like CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder), supported by pharmaceutical companies, have pushed for loosening regulation of ADHD medications, and the American Psychiatric Association, which receives significant funding from drug companies, has gradually expanded its definition of ADHD to include common childhood behaviors like "makes careless mistakes" and "often has difficulty waiting his or her turn." In some cases, schools have sent home to parents pamphlets created by drug companies.

"The Selling of Attention Deficit Disorder" by Alan Schwarz in *The New York Times*, Dec. 15, 2013 (p. 1, 26, 27),
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/15/health/the-selling-of-attention-deficit-disorder.html?_r=0

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4. Shyness – What's Up With That?

In this *New York Times* article, pediatrician Perri Klass describes giving a physical examination to a middle-school girl and, seeing notes from a previous visit saying she was a good student but didn't talk much in class, asked whether that was still a problem. "I'm shy," said the girl. "I'm just shy." Klass lists some possibilities for follow-up:

- The girl needs a counselor because of a psychological issue (perhaps she's unhappy that she doesn't have any friends).

- She needs an academic evaluation because a learning problem is making her self-conscious.
- Perhaps someone is bullying her and she doesn't want to draw attention to herself.
- Or perhaps she's just shy, which Klass says is "part of the great and glorious range of the human normal."

To find out which is closest to the truth, the doctor (or a counselor, teacher, or parent) needs to ask the girl some more questions.

One recent study estimated that about half of American teenagers describe themselves as shy. They're normal, but the fact is, "Children who are shy, who don't raise their hand, who don't talk in class, are really penalized in this society," says Dr. Kathleen Merikangas of the National Institute of Mental Health. Our culture doesn't celebrate being reserved and retiring.

"Shyness reflects a child's place on the temperamental continuum, the part of it that involves dealing with new and unfamiliar circumstances," says Klass. "All ranges of temperament have their uncomfortable, or even pathological, outer zones. Just as there are children whose rambunctious eagerness to participate makes trouble for them in school or signals the presence of other problems, there are children whose silence is a shout for help." The question is whether the child is in distress. Is the child suffering from school phobia? Truly hyperactive? There's always the danger of "pathologizing" behavior that is in the normal range and giving medications that aren't really necessary.

Starting in a new school or entering a new class at the beginning of the school year is full of the new and unfamiliar and makes a lot of children nervous, says Klass. Good routines and parental support can help, as can role-playing to get comfortable with some predictable interactions. But adults shouldn't take over. "The danger point is rescuing too soon, too often, too much, so the kids don't develop coping mechanisms," says Steven Kurtz of the Child Mind Institute in New York City. Dr. Merikangas adds, "Probably the worst thing to do is to say, 'Don't be shy. Don't be quiet.'" Klass agrees: "This is not about trying to change the child's temperament. It's about respecting and honoring temperament and variation, and helping children navigate the world with their own instruments."

"To Help a Shy Child, Listen" by Perri Klass in *The New York Times*, Sept. 17, 2013, http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/09/16/to-help-a-shy-child-listen/?_r=0

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5. Addressing a Major Health Hazard

David Bornstein begins this *New York Times* article provocatively: "Imagine a substance that increased the risks of cancer, diabetes and heart disease for millions. What if it also increased risks for smoking, drug abuse, suicide, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, domestic violence and depression?" What is this substance? *Toxic stress* from abuse, neglect, or domestic violence. This kind of stress has been found to affect a child's brain architecture, cardiovascular system, and immune system.

"It's important to note that toxic stress is not a determinant, but a risk factor," Bornstein continues. "Prevention is best, but it's never too late to mitigate its effects." It's also important

to note that when children have the proper adult support and protection, especially from a parent, stress is much less harmful and can even help promote healthy growth, coping skills, and resilience.

Intervention in the home is crucial, Bornstein says, and he describes the Child First program in Connecticut, which provides home-based parent guidance and child-parent psychotherapy to vulnerable families. The program helps parents recognize troubling behaviors in their children, get in touch with their own past history (many have experienced toxic stress themselves), and provide a safe, nurturing environment for their kids. "Every mother says, 'I want something better for my children,'" says Judy Adel, a Child First clinical director. "They just don't know what it looks like."

"Protecting Children from Toxic Stress" by David Bornstein in *The New York Times*, Nov. 3, 2013 (p. SR4), http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/30/protecting-children-from-toxic-stress/?_r=0

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6. This Kid Will Go Far

In this article in *The New Yorker*, Rebecca Mead quotes the mission statement of Avenues, a recently established private school in New York City: graduates will be "architects of lives that transcend the ordinary… accomplished in the academic skills one would expect; at ease beyond their borders; truly fluent in a second language; good writers and speakers one and all; confident because they excel in a particular passion; artists no matter their field; practical in the ways of the world; emotionally unafraid and physically fit; humble about their gifts and generous of spirit."

This year, a tenth grader proposed an alternative to the school's debate club and dance club – a club that would raise chickens on the school's roof in the spring (this boy had been home-schooled on a farm in Pennsylvania before coming to Avenues). He proposed the following mission statement for the club: it would "harvest chickens who are accomplished in the poultry skills one would expect; at ease beyond their coops and industrial farms; truly fluent in second clucks and crows; good scratchers and peckers one and all; confident because they excel in the tradition of chicken-hood; fowl no matter what field the feed may be found in; practical in the recipes for all tastes of the world; emotionally skittish and physically big-breasted; humble and gratuitous about their gifts of white meat and generous of their eggs."

In the fall, there was some push-back from vegans and animal-rights advocates on the staff. "The part that concerned me was that the mission statement said something about the chickens going to the slaughterhouse of their choosing," said one of the dissenters. The mission was duly revised to include teaching benevolence toward animals. There were also practical concerns about what would happen to the chickens in bad weather (the school is in a grade-A FEMA flood zone). "I am concerned about the fecklessness of the chicken-club members," said another staff member. After some back and forth, the club got its marching orders from Gardner Dunnan, head of the upper school: "You have to check out zoning, health codes, how they are going to be cared for; and, after you've done your due diligence, maybe you'll have some chickens."

"For the Birds" by Rebecca Mead in *The New Yorker*, Jan. 6, 2014 (p. 18-19), http://www.newyorker.com/talk/2014/01/06/140106ta_talk_mead

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7. A High-Level Classroom Checklist

In this ASCD/McREL book, Bryan Goodwin and Elizabeth Ross Hubbell suggest that teachers and school leaders use the following list to make sure the right things are happening in classrooms every day: [See Memo 397 for a summary of Atul Gawande's book, *The Checklist Manifesto*, on the benefits of checklists.]

- Create an oasis of safety and respect in the classroom.
- Use standards to guide every learning opportunity.
- Make performance expectations clear.
- Have students set personal learning objectives.
- Engage students' interest.
- Interact meaningfully with every student.
- Make the most of every minute.
- Use feedback to encourage effort.
- Coach students to mastery.
- Help students develop deep knowledge.
- Help students apply their learning.
- Measure understanding against high expectations.

The 12 Touchstones of Good Teaching: A Checklist for Staying Focused Every Day by Bryan Goodwin and Elizabeth Ross Hubbell (ASCD and McREL, 2013)

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8. Five Questions To Get Students Thinking and Talking

In this *Edutopia* article, Rebecca Alber remembers that during her first year of teaching, she was criticized by an instructional coach for asking her class a question, waiting a few seconds, and then answering it herself. "So that day," she says, "I learned about wait/think time. And also, over the years, I learned to ask better and better questions." Here are some of her favorites:

- What do you think?
- Why do you think that?
- How do you know this?
- Can you tell me more?
- What questions do you still have?

"Five Powerful Questions Teachers Can Ask Students" by Rebecca Alber in *Edutopia*, Oct. 31, 2013, www.edutopia.org/blog/five-powerful-questions-teachers-ask-students-rebecca-alber

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9. Online Curriculum Material

Share My Lesson is an AFT-sponsored website with free curriculum resources, lessons, and units. Here are some resources created by teachers around the U.S.:

- Elementary mathematics and informational text lessons – http://bit.ly/17RSdJJ
- A first-grade unit comparing Cinderella stories – http://bit.ly/17ICGhp
- Introduction to Ratios – http://bit.ly/HMXtDY
- Literature for English Language Learners – http://bit.ly/17cNZZu
- Understanding Rational Numbers – http://bit.ly/17RSQTu
- A Grade 6 lesson on the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 – http://bit.ly/PpKFlf

"Sharemylesson" in *American Educator*, Winter 2013-2014 (Vol. 37, #4, p. 41), http://www.aft.org/pdfs/americaneducator/winter1314/SML.pdf

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Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?

If you have comments or suggestions, if you saw an article or web item in the last week that you think should have been summarized, or if you would like to suggest additional publications that should be covered by the Marshall Memo, please e-mail: kim.marshall48@gmail.com

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and others very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 43 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, and writer, lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 64 carefully-chosen publications (see list to the right), sifts through more than a hundred articles each week, and selects 5-10 that have the greatest potential to improve teaching, leadership, and learning. He then writes a brief summary of each article, pulls out several striking quotes, provides e-links to full articles when available, and e-mails the Memo to subscribers every Monday evening (with occasional breaks; there are 50 issues a year).

Subscriptions:

Individual subscriptions are $50 for a year. Rates decline steeply for multiple readers within the same organization. See the website for these rates and how to pay by check, credit card, or purchase order.

Website:

If you go to http://www.marshallmemo.com you will find detailed information on:

- How to subscribe or renew
- A detailed rationale for the Marshall Memo
- Publications (with a count of articles from each)
- Article selection criteria
- Topics (with a count of articles from each)
- Headlines for all issues
- Reader opinions (with results of an annual survey)
- About Kim Marshall (including links to articles)
- A free sample issue

Subscribers have access to the Members' Area of the website, which has:

- The current issue (in Word or PDF)
- All back issues (also in Word and PDF)
- A database of all articles to date, searchable by topic, title, author, source, level, etc.
- How to change access e-mail or log-in

Core list of publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educational Research Journal
American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
AMLE Magazine
ASCA School Counselor
ASCD SmartBrief/Public Education NewsBlast
Better Evidence-Based Education
Center for Performance Assessment Newsletter
District Administration
ED Magazine
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Update/Curriculum Update
Education Week
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
Educational Horizons
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Elementary School Journal
Essential Teacher
Go Teach
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Educational Review
Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR)
Journal of Staff Development
Kappa Delta Pi Record
Knowledge Quest
Middle School Journal
NASSP Journal
NJEA Review
Perspectives
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Responsive Classroom Newsletter
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
School Administrator
School Library Journal
Teacher
Teachers College Record
Teaching Children Mathematics
Teaching Exceptional Children/Exceptional Children
The Atlantic
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The District Management Journal
The Language Educator
The Learning Principal/Learning System/Tools for Schools
The New York Times
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Time
Wharton Leadership Digest